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PURPOSE:

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recently released guidance for healthcare facilities which utilizes the *Community Transmission** metric to provide options for source control in healthcare facilities.

* During June of 2023, CDC stopped publishing the Community Transmission metric. Pikeville Medical Center will monitor COVID positive tests internally and follow guidance provided by the Ky Department of Public Health and the Pike County Health Department. COVID CDC Tracker Data will be monitored for increasing regional activity.

PLAN:

Given this guidance on the utilization of source control (masking), Pikeville Medical Center has created a two-category system of masking requirements that will be dictated by the COVID CDC Data Tracker level as published by the CDC. State and local guidance will provide supplemental information when regional guidance is needed.

Category Green:

CDC Data Tracker levels are non-HIGH. This category will be prominently displayed by green signage and video monitors throughout the facility.

Universal masking is not required by employees or visitors. Masking and the utilization of PPE shall be based on standard and transmission-based precautions utilized in all hospitals and for all infectious diseases.

- Anyone choosing to mask may do so.
- It is recommended that those individuals continue to mask in a healthcare setting who:
- Have suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection or other respiratory infection (e.g., those with runny nose, cough, sneeze); or
- Had close contact (patients and visitors) or a higher-risk exposure (HCP) with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection, for 10 days after their exposure: or
- Reside or work on a unit or area of the facility experiencing a SARS-CoV-2 outbreak; universal use of source control could be discontinued as a mitigation measure once no new cases have been identified for 14 days; or
- Have otherwise had source control recommended by public health authorities.

PMC employees may be required to mask in certain areas / patient populations where patients are immunocompromised or at otherwise increased risk while providing care.

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Staff who are not fully vaccinated (including those who have been granted an exemption or temporary delay as described above and those for whom it has not yet been 14 days since completion of a primary vaccine series) are expected to comply with (i) all precautions in place for PMC employees generally; (ii) the most recent applicable guidance from the CDC; and (iii) any other precautions implemented by PMC from time to time.

Category RED:

CDC Data Tracker levels are HIGH. This category will be prominently displayed by red signage and video monitors throughout the facility.

All employees working in inpatient units, ambulatory clinic spaces, the emergency department and procedural areas of direct clinical care and patient contact will be required to wear PMC provided surgical masks when in the clinical care setting.

Employees that are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, when located in well-defined areas such as meeting spaces, off campus non-clinical offices, or break rooms may choose not to wear a mask or physically distance. These individuals may choose to continue to mask if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised or at increased risk for severe disease, or if someone in their household is not fully vaccinated. Verification of vaccine status is obtained by Employee Health.

Providers that are caring for or have exposure to PUI or COVID-19 positive patients will continue to adhere to CDC guidelines and current policy as required by the hospital-wide COVID-19 plan.

N-95 respirators are to be used only while performing aerosol-generating procedures, caring for a patient that would otherwise require an N-95 respirator **or** as required by the current hospital-wide COVID-19 plan.

Employees working in clinical area must wear a PMC provided surgical mask. Employees working in nonclinical settings that do not have a cloth mask will be provided a surgical mask.

Visitors are required to wear cloth or surgical mask at all times while in the facility. A surgical mask will be provided to visitors that do not have a cloth or surgical mask.

Patients in a healthcare office/facility must wear either a surgical or cloth mask/face covering when in contact with other patients and/or staff, unless their condition prevents them from tolerating (refer to FAQ number 3, for exceptions).

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Masks with exhalation valves or vents are not permitted to be worn by staff, visitors or patients, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Masks with one-way valves or vents allow air to be exhaled through a hole in the material, which can result in expelled respiratory droplets that can reach others.

Currently, PMC is not utilizing PPE conservation measures. Employees are required to obtain a new mask daily, or more often if soiled or compromised. Please note that PPE conservation strategies may be implemented promptly if deemed necessary according to supply and procurement.

Frequently Asked Questions for Category Red:

1. Does the mask policy apply to every employee in the Facility?

Universal masking applies to all employees in areas of the healthcare facility where they could encounter patients (e.g., hospital cafeteria, common halls/corridors), **whether vaccinated or not**. Employees working in areas where clinical care is provided must wear a PMC provided surgical mask.

Employees that are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, when located in well-defined areas such as meeting spaces, off campus non-clinical offices, or break rooms may choose not to wear a mask or physically distance.

Staff who are not fully vaccinated (including those who have been granted an exemption or temporary delay as described above and those for whom it has not yet been 14 days since completion of a primary vaccine series) are expected to comply with (i) all precautions in place for PMC employees generally; (ii) the most recent applicable guidance from the CDC; and (iii) any other precautions implemented by PMC from time to time.

Masks with a one-way valve, or vent are not permitted. Employees throughout the facility should practice principles of social distancing, respiratory etiquette and frequent hand hygiene.

2. Should visitors be wearing face masks?

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Yes. All visitors are required to wear a cloth or surgical mask at all times, while in the facility. Masks with a one-way valve, or vent are not permitted. Visitors will be provided a surgical mask if they do not have one. If a visitor refuses to wear a mask, they are not permitted to enter the facility. If a visitor develops symptoms while on the premises, that person will be asked to leave unless they need and desire treatment.

3. Should all patients be wearing face masks?

Yes. All patients in a healthcare office/facility must wear either a surgical or cloth mask/face covering when in contact with other patients and/or staff. Masks with a one-way valve, or vent are not permitted

If a patient has a condition that prevents them from tolerating a mask, a tissue may be used to cover their mouth and nose. The patient should be separated from other patients and if possible, placed in a room with the door closed. The staff member assisting the patient is to notify the provider. Face masks or face coverings should not be placed on children under age 2, anyone who has difficulty breathing, unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

Patients admitted to the hospital may remove their face covering when in their room but should put them back on when leaving their room, or when others enter the room (e.g., healthcare workers, visitors).

In situations in which the patient is unable to wear a mask, employees providing direct care (within 6 feet) of the patient, should wear a shield or goggles as a second barrier.

AVA Center/Retail Pharmacy guidance:

Masking is optional in the AVA Center and Retail Pharmacy.

All classrooms, desks, toys and equipment will be thoroughly disinfected between every client's uses.

4. In procedural areas, can a single procedural mask be worn continuously, including across different cases?

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Yes, a single mask can be worn across different cases and between cares of different patients. Masks must be changed if they become wet or contaminated during a case. The routine use of face shields will decrease the likelihood of this occurring and is encouraged.

5. I work in a clinical setting. How can I eat when I am supposed to wear a procedural mask?

Eating is not permitted in clinical areas. If you are working in a clinical setting, follow the removal and reuse instructions

6. I work in a clinical setting. How can I drink when I am supposed to wear a procedural mask?

Drinking is permitted in designated locations in clinical areas. If you need to drink, ensure you are 6 feet away from others, perform hand hygiene, remove the mask, drink, and then replace your procedure/surgical mask. Please follow the guidelines on appropriate doffing and donning.

7. Are employees allowed to take off their masks to eat while on hospital or clinic premises?

Employees can take off their masks to eat and drink when they are on premises in a location where eating and drinking are permitted, and they can maintain a distance of 6 feet. Employees that are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, when located in well-defined areas such as meeting spaces, off campus non-clinical offices, or break rooms may choose not to wear a mask or physically distance. DO NOT wear your masks around your neck with strings hanging or on your arm.

8. Can employees gather in break rooms and other places to eat and relax, and if so, should they leave their procedure/surgical masks on?

Employees that are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, when located in well-defined areas such as meeting spaces, off campus non-clinical offices, or break rooms may choose not to wear a mask or physically distance.

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Staff who are not fully vaccinated (including those who have been granted an exemption or temporary delay as described above and those for whom it has not yet been 14 days since completion of a primary vaccine series) are expected to comply with (i) all precautions in place for PMC employees generally; (ii) the most recent applicable guidance from the CDC; and (iii) any other precautions implemented by PMC from time to time.

9. Can I wear a nonmedical fabric mask or my own personal mask?

Yes. In common areas where no more than brief possible patient contact is possible. While this option is considered “last resort” for patient care, this could reduce your risk of infecting other people should you have an illness in the general population. The best-known strategies for protecting yourself and your family are social distancing and excellent hand hygiene with respiratory etiquette.

****Please note that nonmedical fabric masks **are not allowed** in patient care areas at this time. Masks with a one-way valve, or vent are not permitted.**

Any such masks must not be soiled or damaged and must not be hanging from the strings around your neck or visible if not in use.

All masks should be in good taste. No branding logo other than PMC approved logo, political statements or offensive content should be displayed on a mask. If in doubt, please seek HR’s approval before displaying a mask.

Employees violating the policy, in any way, may face serious disciplinary action up to and including their termination.

KEYWORDS

COVID-19
 CDC
 Mask
 Visitor
 Healthy at Work
 Coronavirus

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REFERENCES

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>